

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 AGR-20 EB-11 AID-20 TRSE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10

PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12 RSR-01 COME-00

SCI-06 NASA-04 STR-08 OMB-01 /179 W

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R 110430Z JUL 73

FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5446

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

COMIDEASTFOR

CINCLANT NORFOLK VA

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON ENG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TANANARIVE 0928/1

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, MA

SUBJ: POLITICAL ESTIMATE OF MALAGASY REPUBLIC

BEGIN SUMMARY: POLITICALLY, MADAGASCAR APPEARS RELATIVELY STABLE AT THIS POINT DESPITE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. FRENCH DOMINATION OF COUNTRY IS RAPIDLY RECEDING. PRESENT MALAGASY GOVT'S POLICY OF GENUINE NON-ALIGNMENT AND UNDERLYING WARINESS OF COMMUNIST COUNTRIES BELIEVED PRECLUDE FRENCH REPLACEMENT BY OTHER POWERS INIMICAL TO US. ON BALANCE, TREND OF RECENT EVENTS HAS FAVORED US INTERSTS. END SUMMARY.

1. POLITICAL: MALAGASY INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION APPEARS RELATIVELY STABLE AT THIS TIME, PARTICULARLY COMPARED WITH END 1972 OR EVEN MAR 73. RAMANANTSOA GOVT GIVES EVERY INDICATION OF BEING IN COMPLETE CONTROL OF SITUATION. IT HAS DEMONSTRATED, THROUGH ARRESTS OF SEVERAL PSD LEADERS FROM PREVIOUS REGIME AND RADICAL MANANDAFY, THAT IT CAN EFFECTIVELY DEAL WITH BOTH RIGHTIST AND LEFTIST EXTREMISTS WHO THREATEN DISRUPTION.

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2. WE SEE NO EVIDENCE SUBSTANTIATE FRENCH RUMORS ABOUT STRIFE WITHIN GOVT. ON CONTRARY, AVAILABLE INFO POINTS TO BASIC COHESIVENESS WITHIN CABINET, AS WELL AS AMONG MILITARY WHO HOLD REAL POWER IN THIS GOVT. FONMIN RATSIRAKA HAS REAPED ENORMOUS PRESTIGE FROM OUTCOME FRANCO-MALAGASY RENEGOTIATION OF COOPERATION ACCORDS, BUT RAMANANTSOA IN OUR VIEW REMAINS FINAL DECISION-MAKER WHEN THERE ARE DIFFERENCES OF VIEW IN GOVT.

3. GOVT REMAINS VERY POPULAR AMONG MERINA, AS SHOWN BY GENUINE ENTHUSIASM GREETING RATSIRAKA ON HIS RETURN FROM PARIS IN EARLY JUNE AND RAMANANTSOA ON TOUR AMONG CROWD AT INDEPENDENCE DAY CEREMONY JUNE 27 IT IS CLEARLY LESS POPULAR AMONG COASTAL PEOPLE, BUT THERE IS NO OTHER RALLYING POINT FOR THEM TO TURN TO. UNDERLYING ETHNIC DIFFERENCES--PASSION-FILLED AS THEY ARE--COULD BE SPARKED INTO RENEWED OUTBREAK, BUT GOVT IS MOST CONSCIOUS OF THIS PROBLEM AND DOING WHAT SEEMS POSSIBLE TO KEEP IT DEFUSED.

4. ECONOMIC: MOST WORRISOME PROSPECT IN OUR VIEW IS LIKELY SERIOUS RICE SHORTAGES IN LATE 1973 AND EARLY 1974. EVEN NOW WITH HARVEST JUST IN, UNUSUAL SHORTAGES CROP UP, WHICH CAN ONLY WORSEN AS YEAR PROCEEDS. SINCE THIS IS MATTER WHICH AFFECTS EVERY URBAN DWELLER, IT COULD GIVE RISE TO FAIRLY STRONG POLITICAL REACTION.

5. URBAN ECONOMIC STAGNATION, WITH RISING UNEMPLOYMENT AND UNDER-EMPLOYMENT, SEEMS LIKELY PERSIST, AT LEAST FOR 2-3 YEARS, WHILE COMMERCIALIZED SECTOR OF ECONOMY UNDERGOES SUBSTANTIAL STRUCTURAL CHANGE OF INCREASING MALAGASIZATION OF WHAT HAS BEEN LARGELY IN FRENCH HANDS. GIVEN ENDEMIC NATURE OF UNEMPLOYMENT, WHAT IS HAPPENING HOWEVER IS ONLY DIFFERENCE OF DEGREE, AND WE THINK IT UNLIKELY TO LEAD TO SERIOUS POLITICAL REPERCUSSIONS.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L FINAL SECTION OF 2 TANANARIVE 0928/2

6. GOVT DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND INVESTMENT CODE LIKELY EMERGE OVER NEXT FEW MONTHS. WE ESTIMATE HOWEVER THAT, LIKE MOST OTHER LDC GOVTS, GOMR WILL PROBABLY NOT TAKE HARD DECISIONS (LIKE RAISING PRICE OF PADDY TO FARMERS AND ESTABLISHMENT REALISTICALLY HIGH INTEREST RATES TO ATTRACT SAVINGS) WHICH COULD SET COUNTRY ON ROAD TO GENUINE DEVELOPMENT. INSTEAD, IT LIKELY FOLLOW UNPROMISING PATH OF INCREASING GOVT PARTICIPATION IN BUSINESS, THOUGH IT WILL PROBABLY AVOID POLICY OF EXTREME NATIONALIZATION.

7. FOREIGN POLICY: DOMINANT FRENCH ROLE IN MADAGASCAR IS DECLINING RAPIDLY. POLITICALLY, IT HAS ALREADY DISAPPEARED. MILITARILY, IT WILL BE VIRTUALLY GONE BY SEPT 1 WHEN FRENCH FORCES WILL BE DOWN TO 400 NAVAL PERSONNEL AT DIEGO-SUAREZ (WHO WILL ALSO BE PHASED OUT AFTER TWO YEARS), PLUS DIMINISHING NUMBER OF MILITARY ADVISORS TO MALAGASY FORCES. PARADOXICALLY, CERTAIN FRENCH (I.E., THOSE WHO BELIEVED REFUSE ADHERE TO PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED OFFICIAL FRENCH POLICY) ARE CONSIDERED BY PRESENT GOMR AS BIGGEST CURRENT SECURITY THREAT TO CONFIDENTIAL

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REAL INDEPENDENCE OF COUNTRY.

8. COROLLARY TO DECLINE OF FRENCH ROLE IS PRESENT GOVT'S TWIN-PILLARED FOREIGN POLICY OF NON-ALIGNMENT AND "OPENING OUT IN ALL DIRECTIONS". DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS HAVE BEEN RAPIDLY ESTABLISHED WITH COMMUNIST COUNTRIES AND AID WELCOMED FROM THEM. HOWEVER, WARINESS OVER DANGERS OF INTERNAL SUBVERSION HAS, AT LEAST SO FAR, PRECLUDED ACCEPTANCE RESIDENT DIP MISSIONS OR AID PERSONNEL FROM THOSE COUNTRIES. NEW FOREIGN POLICY HAS MOVED MADAGASCAR CLOSER TO OAU IN TERMS OF IDENTIFICATION WITH SUPPORT OF AFRICAN LIBERATION MOVEMENTS AND VOTING ON ISSUES IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS. EVEN IN THIS AREA, CONSCIOUSNESS THAT REAL MALAGASY INTERESTS ARE NOT AT STAKE APPEARS IMPOSE RESTRAINING HAND ON HOW FAR GOVT GOES. MALAGASY WELCOMING INCREASED JAPANESE AID AND CLOSER BUSINESS RELATIONS, BUT WILL ENDEAVOR AVOID SHIFT ECONOMICALLY FROM FRENCH TO JAPANESE DOMINANCE.

9. RE US POSITION, GOMR IS BEING CAREFUL AVOID ACTIONS WHICH MIGHT BE INTERPRETED BY FRENCH (OR MALAGASY PUBLIC) AS AMERICAN REPLACEMENT OF FRENCH ROLE IN MADAGASCAR. BUT INDICATIONS ARE THAT WE CAN COUNT ON CONTINUED PRESENCE OF NASA STATION AND US NAVAL SHIP VISITS(INCLUDING RESUMPTION OF CALLS AT DIEGO-SUAREZ IN FEW MONTHS WHEN CONCERN OVER POSSIBLE FRENCH MISINTERPRETATION HAS DIED DOWN). DEVELOPMENT OF MALAGASY FOREIGN POLICY GIVES NO INDICATION OF REAL DAMAGE TO OTHER US SECURITY INTERESTS AS GENUINE NON-ALIGNMENT SEEMS PRECLUDE ANY UNDESIRABLE SECURITY ROLE IN MADAGASCAR BY HOSTILE POWER. FINALLY, US COMMERCIAL INTEREST IN INCREASED EXPORTS TO MADAGASCAR ENHANCED BY RECENT TREND IN MALAGASY POLICY.

10. CONCLUSION: WHILE FRENCH VIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS AND PROSPECTS IN MADAGASCAR IS PERHAPS UNDERSTANDABLY DIFFERENT UNDER PRESENT CIRCUM-

STANCES FROM OURS, WE DEFINITELY DO NOT SHARE FRENCH PESSIMISM ABOUT INTERNAL POLITICAL INSTABILITY AND EXTERNAL RADICALIZATION OF MALAGASY POLICY. ON BALANCE,NDC STANDS TO GAIN FROM DEVELOPMENTS AND PROSPECTS IN MADAGASCAR, GIVEN PRIORITY OF OUR COMMERCIAL INTERESTS AT THIS STAGE IN US HISTORY.MENDENHALL
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